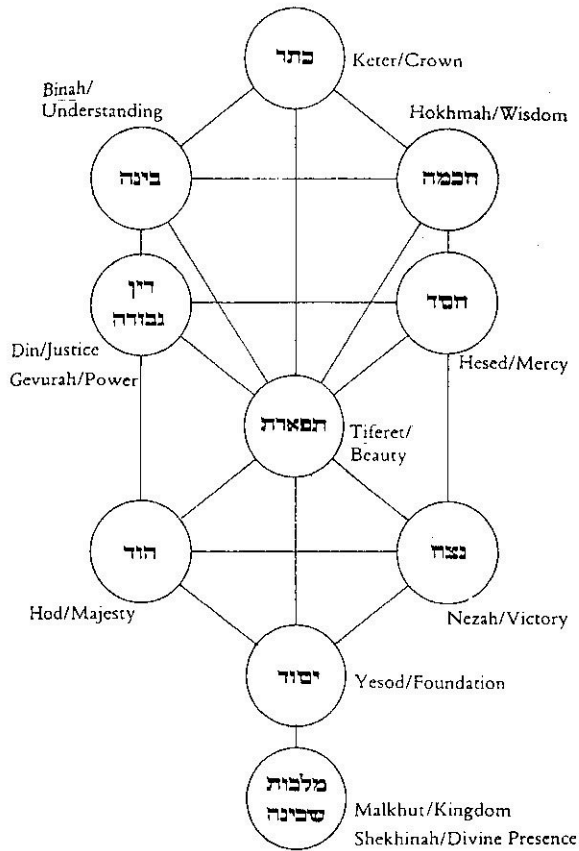


The mysteries of beit bal

Stewart Shilcrat

For centuries, Jewish mystics have tried to understand G-d's nature and our role in the universe. During the 13th century, they developed the idea of the ten *sefirot* or aspects of G-d. The *sefirot* were depicted in the *Zohar* as the Tree of Life, and they described in a very real way G-d's essence. (See diagram below):



Recently a discovery of great importance sheds new light on this formulation. An ancient manuscript found in the *Bayit shel Ruth* complex in Beit Bal, Israel, questions the accuracy of the Zoharic design. Written by Rabbi Avner Yom V'yom, sage of Koopahstan during the reign of Khani Mahk, the document realigns the *sefirot* into a new configuration.

STEWART SHILCRAT plays ball with the St. Louis Reconstructionist Havurah

According to this manuscript, divine energy does not flow harmoniously from the uppermost *sefirah Keter* to the most immanent *Shekhinah* and then into our world as the *Zohar* states. Rather, the *Shekhinah* is said to be in tension with and competes with the other *sefirot*. The divine flow is hurled from *Tiferet* in the center or "mound" of the configuration and is either caught by *Yesod* (the home base of the world) and then passed back to *Tiferet*; or it is deflected by *Shekhinah* to the other *sefirot*. If *Shekhinah* succeeds in getting a piece of the energy, it is sent in a form of spiritual exile among the five *sefirot* that surround and defend *Tiferet*. These form an inner field of divine emanations, like a precious diamond on G-d's crown. *Shekhinah* during this exile strives to return to its original place at *Yesod*.

The first position *Shekhinah* is exiled to is *Hod*, symbolized by the left leg fixed firmly in place. Next is *Hokhmah*, where according to R. Reuben Sandberg from the Yeled Dov Yeshiva, the divine flow can be doubled up. Then at *Nezah*, *Shekhinah* stops only shortly before going on to the third position, *Binah*. There the divine flow seems to come in fast driving lines, hotly cornering the *Shekhinah*.

Beyond these exists an outer field of emanations: *Hesed*, symbolized by the right arm; *Keter*, the crown or center of the field; and *Gevurah* or Power, symbolized by a strong left arm. These bring back to the inner field of *sefirot* any energy *Shekhinah* has deflected past them.

Later commentators, such as R. Yoseph Gargiol of Yeshiva Elias or the revered Rabbenu Reuven Khostus, taught that the *Shekhinah* could also return home safely to *Yesod* when it deflected the emanations over the outer "wall" between the *sefirot* and the unknowable *Ein Sof*—where all perception is bleached away. R. Yaakov Buck also notes that just as we have a *Shabbat* every seventh day, so, too, is there a sabbatical moment during the seventh cycle of this divine tension.

At times knowledge of these divine secrets have brought wonders. The famous 69 miracles of Metz being one example. This knowledge, if used by the wrong people can, however, lead to disastrous results. The trouble caused by the Young Wizards of Philippopolis Greece was great. Today we no longer are sure of the meaning of everything in the document. For example, the holy phrase recited before prayer and meditation, "*P'lei Bal*", remains enigmatic.

Each spring scholars meet to practice these teachings. For the next seven months, under the management of such *tzaddikim* as R. Lavan Herzog, R.

Yonaton Anderson (who taught a theory of gathering the holy sparks), and R. Levi Pinella, kabbalistic conclaves are held at various *yeshivot* throughout the land. In doing so, they bring the holy light to the world and joy to our hearts.

(See below for R. Yom V'yom's mystical diagram.) □

